



**GOVERNOR KEMPTHORNE TOAST TO PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH  
STATE DINNER FOR THE NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION  
THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON, DC  
February 22, 2004**

Mr. President and Mrs. Bush, on behalf of the governors of the United States of America, and her territories, and our spouses and our family members, thank you for the great honor of inviting us to the White House and being in your company tonight.

Today is a significant day. Today is February 22<sup>nd</sup>, it's the birth date of George Washington. When I had the great honor of serving in the United States Senate, on a variety of occasions I would walk through the Rotunda. One of the pictures that always had great meaning to me was a beautiful painting of General Washington voluntarily giving back his command to the Continental Congress. He was really one of the first conquering generals in a thousand years to not claim the spoils of war for himself.

He was ready to return to civilian life, at a place called Mount Vernon, some 19 miles from here, that he loved. And yet his country called upon him again, and he became the President of these United States.

And in that Constitution which he took that oath upon, it affirmed that the President also is to carry out the role of Commander in Chief of our military. The heritage being so fine, when you consider the lineage of George Washington.

I'm also mindful that I'm standing in front of a portrait of another great President, Abraham Lincoln, who also during his tenure, was called upon to be Commander in Chief.

And tonight, we again are in the presence of a great president who has been called upon to be Commander in Chief.

Mr. President, as you know, in the last two weeks, a bipartisan group of governors visited Iraq. As you also know from your experience with the military, these are the finest men and women anywhere in the world. It was inspiring to we governor who were there.

We visited a variety of places, but one location was called Camp Victory, which formerly had been one of the palaces of Saddam Hussein. We visited the Joint Operations Center, and I was called upon to make comments to the assembled generals and enlisted personnel.

I made note of the fact that when we returned to the United States, that the governors would be meeting with the President of the United States and the Vice President of the United States, and I simply asked them if they had a message they would like me to deliver to their Commander in Chief. And a female officer in the back, in a strong voice, said 'please tell him we're proud of him.'

Mr. President, tonight I deliver that message to you. Tonight my toast is to our Commander in Chief and to all the military of the United States of America, which are the finest. And to the First Lady, in her role, personifying the role of all families, in support of those who lead and defend the democracy, the freedom we enjoy here, in the United States of America.

